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Preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*

The study on Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* to which this was a preface was written during the years 1925–28 in Germany. The author was a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grips of the theologico-political predicament.

At that time Germany was a liberal democracy. The regime was known as the Weimar Republic. In the light of the most authoritative political document of recent Germany, Bismarck's *Thoughts and Recollections*, the option for Weimar reveals itself as an option against Bismarck. In the eyes of Bismarck, Weimar stood for leanings to the West, if not for the inner dependence of the Germans on the French and above all on the English, and a corresponding aversion to everything Russian. But Weimar was, above all, the residence of Goethe, the contemporary of the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, and of the victory of the French Revolution and Napoleon, whose sympathetic understanding was open to both antagonists and who identified himself in his thought with neither. By linking itself to Weimar the German liberal democracy proclaimed its moderate, non-radical character: its resolve to keep a balance between the dedication to the principles of 1789 and the dedication to the highest German tradition.

The Weimar Republic was weak. It had a single moment of strength, if not of greatness: its strong reaction to the murder of the Jewish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walther Rathenau, in 1922. On the whole it presented the sorry spectacle of justice without a sword or of justice unable to use the sword. The election of Field Marshal von Hindenburg to the presidency of the German Reich in 1925 showed everyone who had eyes to see that the Weimar Republic had only a short time to live: the old Germany was stronger—stronger in will—than the new Germany. What was still lacking then for the destruction of the Weimar Republic was the opportune moment; that moment was to come within a few years. The weakness of the Weimar Republic made

certain its speedy destruction. It did not make certain the victory of national socialism. The victory of national socialism became necessary in Germany for the same reason that the victory of communism had become necessary in Russia: the man who had by far the strongest will or single-mindedness, the greatest ruthlessness, daring, and power over his following, and the best judgment about the strength of the various forces in the immediately relevant political field was the leader of the revolution.¹

Half-Marxists trace the weakness of the Weimar Republic to the power of monopoly capitalism and the economic crisis of 1929, but there were other liberal democracies which were and remained strong although they had to contend with the same difficulties. It is more reasonable to refer to the fact that the Weimar Republic had come into being through the defeat of Germany in World War I, although this answer merely leads to the further question as to why Germany had not succeeded in becoming a liberal democracy under more auspicious circumstances (for instance, in 1848), i.e., why liberal democracy had always been weak in Germany. It is true that the Bismarckian regime as managed by William II had become discredited already prior to World War I and still more through that war and its outcome, and correspondingly liberal democracy had become ever more attractive; but at the crucial moment the victorious liberal democracies discredited liberal democracy in the eyes of Germany by the betrayal of their principles through the Treaty of Versailles.

It is safer to try to understand the low in the light of the high than the high in the light of the low. In doing the latter one necessarily distorts the high, whereas in doing the former one does not deprive the low of the freedom to reveal itself fully as what it is. By its name the Weimar Republic refers one to the greatest epoch of German thought and letters, to the epoch extending from the last third of the eighteenth century to the first third of the nineteenth century. No one can say that classical Germany spoke clearly and distinctly in favor of liberal democracy. This is true despite the fact that classical Germany had been initiated by Rousseau. In the first place Rousseau was the first modern critic of the fundamental modern project (man's conquest of nature for the sake of the relief of man's estate) who therewith laid the foundation for the distinction, so fateful for German thought, between civilization and culture. Above all, the radicalization and deepening of Rousseau's thought by classical German philosophy culminated in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the legitimation of that kind of constitutional monarchy which is based on the recognition of the rights of man, and in which government is in the hands of highly educated civil servants appointed

by a hereditary king. It has been said, not without reason, that Hegel's rule over Germany came to an end only on the day that Hitler came to power. But Rousseau prepared not only the French Revolution and classical German philosophy but also that extreme reaction to the French Revolution which is German romanticism. To speak politically and crudely, "the romantic school in Germany . . . was nothing other than the resurrection of medieval poetry as it had manifested itself . . . in art and in life."² The longing for the Middle Ages began in Germany in the same moment in which the actual Middle Ages—the Holy Roman Empire ruled by a German—ended, in what was then thought to be the moment of Germany's deepest humiliation. In Germany, and only there, did the end of the Middle Ages coincide with the beginning of the longing for the Middle Ages. Compared with the medieval Reich, which had lasted for almost a millennium until 1806, Bismarck's Reich (to say nothing of Hegel's Prussia) revealed itself as a little Germany not only in size. All profound German longings—for those for the Middle Ages were not the only ones nor even the most profound ones—all these longings for the origins or, negatively expressed, all German dissatisfactions with modernity pointed toward a third Reich, for Germany was to be the core even of Nietzsche's Europe ruling the planet.³

The weakness of liberal democracy in Germany explains why the situation of the indigenous Jews was more precarious in Germany than in any other Western country. Liberal democracy had originally defined itself in theologico-political treatises as the opposite, less of the more or less enlightened despotism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, than of "the kingdom of darkness," i.e., of medieval society. According to liberal democracy, the bond of society is universal human morality, whereas religion (positive religion) is a private affair; in the Middle Ages religion, i.e., Catholic Christianity, was the bond of society. The action most characteristic of the Middle Ages is the Crusades; it may be said to have culminated not accidentally in the murder of whole Jewish communities. The German Jews owed their emancipation to the French Revolution or its effects. They were given full political rights for the first time by the Weimar Republic. The Weimar Republic was succeeded by the only German regime—by the only regime that ever was anywhere—which had no other clear principle except murderous hatred of the Jews, for "Aryan" had no clear meaning other than "non-Jewish." One must keep in mind the fact that Hitler did not come from Prussia, nor even from Bismarck's Reich.

While the German Jews were politically in a more precarious situation than the Jews in any other Western country, they originated "the science of Judaism," the historical-critical study by Jews of the Jewish

heritage. The emancipation of the Jews in Germany coincided with the greatest epoch of German thought and poetry, with the epoch in which Germany was the foremost country in thought and poetry. One cannot help comparing the period of German Jewry with the period of Spanish Jewry. The greatest achievements of Jews during the Spanish period were partly rendered possible by the fact that Jews became open to the influx of Greek thought, which was understood to be Greek only accidentally. During the German period, however, the Jews became open to the influx of German thought, of the thought of the particular nation in the midst of which they lived—of a thought which was understood to be German essentially: the political dependence was also spiritual dependence. This was the core of the predicament of German Jewry.

Three quotations may serve to illustrate the precarious situation of the Jews in Germany. Goethe, the greatest among the cosmopolitan Germans, a “decided non-Christian,” summarizes the results of a conversation about a new society to be founded, between his Wilhelm Meister and “the gay Friedrich,” without providing his summary with quotation marks, as follows:

To this religion [the Christian religion] we hold on, but in a particular manner; we instruct our children from their youth on in the great advantages which [that religion] has brought to us; but of its author, of its course, we speak to them only at the end. Then only does the author become dear and cherished, and all reports regarding him become sacred. Drawing a conclusion which one may perhaps call pedantic, but of which one must at any rate admit that it follows from the premise, we do not tolerate any Jew among us; for how could we grant him a share in the highest culture, the origin and tradition of which he denies?⁴

Two generations later Nietzsche could say: “I have not yet met a German who was favorably disposed toward the Jews.”⁵ One might try to trace Nietzsche’s judgment to the narrowness of his circle of acquaintances: no one would expect to find people favorably disposed toward Jews among the German Lutheran pastors among whom Nietzsche grew up, to say nothing of Jakob Burckhardt in Basel. Nietzsche has chosen his words carefully; he surely excluded himself when making the judgment quoted, as appears, in addition, from the context. But he does not say something trivial. While his circle of acquaintances was limited—perhaps unusually limited—he was of unusual perspicacity. Besides, being favorably disposed toward this or that man or woman of Jewish origin does not mean being favorably disposed toward Jews. Two generations later, in 1953, Heidegger could

speak of "the inner truth and greatness of national socialism."⁶

In the course of the nineteenth century many Western men had come to conceive of many, if not all, sufferings as problems which as such were held to be soluble as a matter of course. Thus, they had come to speak also of the Jewish problem. The German-Jewish problem was never solved. It was annihilated by the annihilation of the German Jews. Prior to Hitler's rise to power most German Jews believed that their problem had been solved in principle by liberalism: the German Jews were Germans of the Jewish faith, i.e., they were no less German than the Germans of the Christian faith or of no faith. They assumed that the German state (to say nothing of German society or culture) was or ought to be neutral to the difference between Christians and Jews or between non-Jews and Jews. This assumption was not accepted by the strongest part of Germany and hence by Germany. In the words of Herzl: "Who belongs and who does not belong, is decided by the majority; it is a question of power." At any rate it could seem that in the absence of a superior recognized equally by both parties the natural judge on the Germanness of the German Jews was the non-Jewish Germans. As a consequence, a small minority of the German Jews, but a considerable minority of German-Jewish youth studying at the universities, had turned to Zionism. Zionism was almost never wholly divorced from the traditional Jewish hopes. On the other hand, Zionism never intended to bring about a restoration like the one achieved in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah: the return to the land of Israel was not thought to culminate in the building of the third temple and in the restoration of the sacrificial service.

The peculiarity of Zionism as a modern movement comes out most clearly in the strictly political Zionism as presented in the first place by Leon Pinsker in his *Autoemancipation*, and then by Theodor Herzl in *The Jews' State*. Pinsker and Herzl started from the failure of the liberal solution, but continued to see the problem to be solved as it had begun to be seen by liberalism, i.e., as a merely human problem. They radicalized this purely human understanding. The terrible fate of the Jews was in no sense to be understood any longer as connected with divine punishment for the sins of our fathers or with the providential mission of the chosen people and hence to be borne with the meek fortitude of martyrs. It was to be understood in merely human terms: as constituting a purely political problem which as such cannot be solved by appealing to the justice or generosity of other nations, to say nothing of a league of all nations. Accordingly, political Zionism was concerned primarily with nothing but the cleansing of the Jews from millennial degradation, or with the recovery of Jewish dignity, honor, or pride.

The failure of the liberal solution meant that the Jews could not regain their honor by assimilating themselves as individuals to the nations among which they lived or by becoming citizens like all other citizens of the liberal states: the liberal solution brought at best legal equality, but not social equality; as a demand of reason it had no effect on the feelings of the non-Jews. To quote Herzl again: "We are a nation—the enemy makes us a nation whether we like it or not." In the last analysis this is nothing to be deplored, for "the enemy is necessary for the highest effort of the personality." Only through securing the honor of the Jewish nation could the individual Jew's honor be secured. The true solution of the Jewish problem requires that the Jews become "like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8), that the Jewish nation assimilate itself to the nations of the world or that it establish a modern, liberal, secular (but not necessarily democratic) state. Political Zionism strictly understood was then the movement of an elite on behalf of a community, constituted by common descent and common degradation, for the restoration of their honor through the acquisition of statehood and therefore of a country—of any country: the land which the strictly political Zionism promised to the Jews was not necessarily the land of Israel.

This project implied a profound modification of the traditional Jewish hopes—a modification arrived at through a break with these hopes. For the motto of his pamphlet Pinsker chose these words of Hillel: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if not now, when?" He omitted the sentence which forms the center of Hillel's statement: "And if I am only for myself, what am I?" He saw the Jewish people as a herd without a shepherd to protect and gather it; he did not long for a shepherd, but for the transformation of the herd into a nation which can take care of itself. He regarded the Jewish situation as a natural sickness which can be cured only by natural means. What the change effected by strictly political Zionism means, one sees most clearly when, returning to the origin, one ponders over this sentence of Spinoza: "If the foundations of their religion did not effeminate the minds of the Jews, I would absolutely believe that they will at some time, given the occasion (for human things are mutable), establish their state again."

Strictly political Zionism became effective only through becoming an ingredient, not to say the backbone, of Zionism at large, i.e., by making its peace with traditional Jewish thought. Through this alliance or fusion it brought about the establishment of the state of Israel and therewith that cleansing which it had primarily intended; it thus procured a blessing for all Jews everywhere regardless of whether they admit it or not.⁷ It did not, however, solve the Jewish problem. It could not solve the

Jewish problem because of the narrowness of its original conception, however noble. This narrowness was pointed out most effectively by cultural Zionism: strictly political Zionism, concerned only with the present emergency and resolve, lacks historical perspective; the community of descent, of the blood, must also be a community of the mind, of the national mind; the Jewish state will be an empty shell without a Jewish culture which has its roots in the Jewish heritage. One could not have taken this step unless one had previously interpreted the Jewish heritage itself as a culture, i.e., as a product of the national mind, of the national genius.⁸ Yet the foundation, the authoritative layer, of the Jewish heritage presents itself, not as a product of the human mind, but as a divine gift, as divine revelation. Did one not completely distort the meaning of the heritage to which one claimed to be loyal by interpreting it as a culture like any other high culture? Cultural Zionism believed itself to have found a safe middle ground between politics (power politics) and divine revelation, between the subcultural and the supracultural, but it lacked the sternness of the two extremes. When cultural Zionism understands itself, it turns into religious Zionism. But when religious Zionism understands itself, it is in the first place Jewish faith and only secondarily Zionism. It must regard as blasphemous the notion of a human solution to the Jewish problem. It may go so far as to regard the establishment of the state of Israel as the most important event in Jewish history since the completion of the Talmud, but it cannot regard it as the arrival of the messianic age, of the redemption of Israel and of all men. The establishment of the state of Israel is the most profound modification of the *galut* which has occurred, but it is not the end of the *galut*: in the religious sense, and perhaps not only in the religious sense, the state of Israel is a part of the *galut*. Finite, relative problems can be solved; infinite, absolute problems cannot be solved. In other words, human beings will never create a society which is free from contradictions. From every point of view it looks as if the Jewish people were the chosen people, at least in the sense that the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem insofar as it is a social or political problem.

To realize that the Jewish problem is insoluble means never to forget the truth proclaimed by Zionism regarding the limitations of liberalism. Liberalism stands and falls by the distinction between state and society or by the recognition of a private sphere, protected by the law but impervious to the law, with the understanding that, above all, religion as particular religion belongs to the private sphere. As certainly as the liberal state will not "discriminate" against its Jewish citizens, as certainly is it constitutionally unable and even unwilling to prevent

"discrimination" against Jews on the part of individuals or groups. To recognize a private sphere in the sense indicated means to permit private "discrimination," to protect it, and thus in fact to foster it. The liberal state cannot provide a solution to the Jewish problem, for such a solution would require the legal prohibition against every kind of "discrimination," i.e., the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between state and society, the destruction of the liberal state. Such a destruction would not by any means solve the Jewish problem, as is shown in our days by the anti-Jewish policy of the U.S.S.R. It is foolish to say that that policy contradicts the principles of communism, for it contradicts the principles of communism to separate the principles of communism from the communist movement. The U.S.S.R. owes its survival to Stalin's decision not to wait for the revolution of the Western proletariat, i.e., for what others would do for the U.S.S.R., but to build up socialism in a single country where his word was the law, by the use of any means, however bestial, and these means could include, as a matter of course, means successfully used before, not to say invented, by Hitler: the large-scale murder of party members and anti-Jewish measures. This is not to deny that communism has not become what national socialism always was, the prisoner of an anti-Jewish ideology, but it makes use of anti-Jewish measures in an unprincipled manner, when and where they seem to be expedient. It is merely to confirm our contention that the uneasy "solution of the Jewish problem" offered by the liberal state is superior to the communist "solution."

There is a Jewish problem which is humanly soluble:⁹ the problem of the Western Jewish individual who or whose parents severed his connection with the Jewish community in the expectation that he would thus become a normal member of a purely liberal or of a universal human society, and who is naturally perplexed when he finds no such society. The solution to his problem is return to the Jewish community, the community established by the Jewish faith and the Jewish way of life—*teshuva* (ordinarily rendered by "repentance") in the most comprehensive sense. Some of our contemporaries believe that such a return is altogether impossible because they believe that the Jewish faith has been overthrown once and for all, not by blind rebellion, but by evident refutation. While admitting that their deepest problem would be solved by that return, they assert that intellectual probity forbids them to bring the sacrifice of the intellect for the sake of satisfying even the most vital need. Yet they can hardly deny that a vital need legitimately induces a man to probe whether what seems to be an impossibility is in fact only a very great difficulty.

The founder of cultural Zionism could still deny that the Jewish people have a providential mission on the ground that Darwin had

destroyed the most solid basis of teleology.¹⁰ At the time and in the country in which the present study was written, it was granted by everyone except backward people that the Jewish faith had not been refuted by science or by history. The storms stirred up by Darwin and to a lesser degree by Wellhausen had been weathered; one could grant to science and history everything they seem to teach regarding the age of the world, the origin of man, the impossibility of miracles, the impossibility of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of the body, the Jahvist, the Elohist, the third Isaiah, and so on, without abandoning one iota of the substance of the Jewish faith. Some haggling regarding particular items, which issued sometimes in grudging concessions, was still going on in outlying districts, but the battle for the capital had been decided by the wholesale surrender to science and history of the whole sphere in which science and history claim to be or to become competent, and by the simultaneous depreciation of that whole sphere as religiously irrelevant. It had become religiously relevant, it was affirmed, only through a self-misunderstanding of religion, if of a self-misunderstanding which was inevitable in earlier times and which on the whole was even harmless in earlier times. That self-misunderstanding consisted in understanding revelation as a body of teachings and rules which includes such teachings and rules as could never become known to the unassisted human mind as true and binding, such as the human mind would reject as subrational were they not proved to be suprarational by the certainty that they are the word of God; men who were not earwitnesses of God's declaring these teachings and rules could have that certainty only through a reliable tradition which also vouches for the reliable transmission of the very words of God, and through miracles. The self-misunderstanding is removed when the content of revelation is seen to be rational, which does not necessarily mean that everything hitherto thought to be revealed is rational. The need for external credentials of revelation (tradition and miracles) disappears as its internal credentials come to abound. The truth of traditional Judaism is the religion of reason, or the religion of reason is secularized Judaism. But the same claim could be made for Christianity, and however close secularized Judaism and secularized Christianity might come to each other, they are not identical, and as purely rational they ought to be identical. Above all, if the truth of Judaism is the religion of reason, then what was formerly believed to be revelation by the transcendent God must now be understood as the work of the human imagination in which human reason was effective to some extent; what has now become a clear and distinct idea was originally a confused idea.¹¹ What, except demonstrations of the existence of God by theoretical rea-

son or postulations of His existence by practical reason which were becoming ever more incredible, could prevent one from taking the last step, i.e., to assert that God Himself is a product of the human mind, at best "an idea of reason"?

These and similar denials or interpretations suddenly lost all their force by the simple observation that they contradict not merely inherited opinions but present experience. At first hearing one may be reminded of what Leibniz had said when overcoming Bayle's doubt regarding revelation: "Toutes ces difficultés invincibles, ces combats prétendus de la raison contre la foi s'évanouissent.

Hi motus animorum atque haec discrimina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt."¹²

God's revealing Himself to man, His addressing man, is not merely known through traditions going back to the remote past and is therefore now "merely believed," but is genuinely known through present experience which every human being can have if he does not refuse himself to it. This experience is not a kind of self-experience, of the actualization of a human potentiality, of the human mind coming into its own, into what it desires or is naturally inclined to, but of something undesired, coming from the outside, going against man's grain; it is the only awareness of something absolute which cannot be relativized in any way as everything else, rational or nonrational, can; it is the experience of God as the Thou, the father and king of all men; it is the experience of an unequivocal command addressed to me here and now as distinguished from general laws or ideas which are always disputable and permitting of exceptions; only by surrendering to God's experienced call which calls for one's loving Him with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's might can one come to see the other human being as one's brother and love him as oneself. The absolute experience will not lead back to Judaism—for instance, to the details of what the Christians call the ceremonial law—if it does not recognize itself in the Bible and clarify itself through the Bible, and if it is not linked up with considerations of how traditional Judaism understands itself and with meditations about the mysterious fate of the Jewish people. The return to Judaism also requires today the overcoming of what one may call the perennial obstacle to the Jewish faith: of traditional philosophy, which is of Greek, pagan origin. For the respectable, impressive, or specious alternatives to the acceptance of revelation, to the surrender to God's will, have always presented themselves and still present themselves as based on what man knows by himself, by his reason. Reason has

reached its perfection in Hegel's system; the essential limitations of Hegel's system show the essential limitations of reason and therewith the radical inadequacy of all rational objections to revelation. With the final collapse of rationalism the perennial battle between reason and revelation, between unbelief and belief, has been decided in principle, even on the plane of human thought, in favor of revelation. Reason knows only of subjects and objects, but surely the living and loving God is infinitely more than a subject and can never be an object, something at which one can look in detachment or indifference. Philosophy as hitherto known, the old thinking, so far from starting from the experience of God, abstracted from such experience or excluded it; hence, if it was theistic, it was compelled to have recourse to demonstrations of the existence of God as a thinking or a thinking and willing being. The new thinking as unqualified empiricism speaks of God, man, and the world as actually experienced, as realities irreducible to one another, whereas all traditional philosophy was reductionist. For if it did not assert that the world and man are eternal, i.e., deny the creator-God, it sought for the reality preceding world and man as it precedes world and man and as it succeeds world and man, i.e., for what cannot be experienced by man, by the whole man, but can only be inferred or thought by him. Unqualified empiricism does not recognize any such Without or Beyond as a reality, but only as unreal forms, essences, or concepts which can never be more than objects, i.e., objects of mere thought.¹³

The new thinking had been originated, above all, by Franz Rosenzweig, who is thought to be the greatest Jewish thinker whom German Jewry has brought forth. It was counteracted by another form of the new thinking, the form originated by Heidegger.¹⁴ It was obvious that Heidegger's new thinking led far away from any charity as well as from any humanity. On the other hand, it could not be denied that he had a deeper understanding than Rosenzweig of what was implied in the insight or demand that the traditional philosophy which rested on Greek foundations must be superseded by a new thinking. He would never have said as Rosenzweig did that "we know in the most precise manner, we know it with the intuitional knowledge of experience, what God taken by Himself, what man taken by himself, what the world taken by itself 'is'." Nor did he assume, as Rosenzweig assumed, that we possess without further ado an adequate understanding of Greek philosophy, of the basic stratum of that old thinking which has to be overcome: with the questioning of traditional philosophy the traditional understanding of the tradition becomes questionable. For this reason alone he could not have said as Rosenzweig did that most Platonic dia-

logues are “boring.”¹⁵ This difference between Rosenzweig and Heidegger, about which much more could be said, was not unconnected with their difference regarding revelation. At that time Heidegger expressed his thought about revelation by silence or deed rather than by speech. Rosenzweig’s friend Martin Buber quotes a much later utterance of Heidegger which gives one, I believe, an inkling of Heidegger’s argument—especially if it is taken in conjunction with well-known utterances of Nietzsche whom Heidegger evidently follows in this matter.

“The ‘prophets’ of these religions [sc. Judaism and Christianity],” says Heidegger according to Buber, “do not begin by foretelling the word of the Holy. They announce immediately the God upon whom the certainty of salvation in a supernatural blessedness reckons.”¹⁶ Buber comments on this statement as follows:

Incidentally, I have never in our time encountered on a high philosophical plane such a far-reaching misunderstanding of the prophets of Israel. The prophets of Israel have never announced a God upon whom their hearers’ striving for security reckoned. They have always aimed to shatter all security and to proclaim in the opened abyss of the final insecurity the unwished for God who demands that His human creatures become real, they become human, and confounds all who imagine that they can take refuge in the certainty that the temple of God is in their midst.

Heidegger does not speak of the prophets’ “hearers,” but he clearly means that the prophets themselves were concerned with security.¹⁷ This assertion is not refuted by the well-known facts which Buber points out—by the fact, in a word, that for the prophets there is no refuge and fortress except God: the security afforded by the temple of God is nothing, but the security afforded by God is everything. As Buber says seventeen pages earlier in the same publication, “He who loves God only as a moral ideal, can easily arrive at despairing of the guidance of a world the appearance of which contradicts, hour after hour, all principles of his moral ideality.”¹⁸ Surely the Bible teaches that in spite of all appearances to the contrary the world is guided by God or, to use the traditional term, that there is particular providence, that man is protected by God if he does not put his trust in flesh and blood but in God alone, that he is not completely exposed or forsaken, that he is not alone, that he has been created by a being which is, to use Buber’s expression, a Thou. Buber’s protest would be justified if the biblical prophets were only, as Wellhausen may seem to have hoped, prophets of insecurity, not to say of an evil end,¹⁹ and not also predictors of the messianic future, of the ultimate victory of truth and justice, of the final salvation and secu-

urity, although not necessarily of the final salvation and security of all men. In other words, the biblical experience is not simply undesired or against man's grain: grace perfects nature; it does not destroy nature. Not every man but every noble man is concerned with justice or righteousness and therefore with any possible extrahuman, suprahuman support of justice, or with the security of justice. The insecurity of man and everything human is not an absolutely terrifying abyss if the highest of which a man knows is absolutely secure. Plato's Athenian Stranger does not indeed experience that support, that refuge and fortress as the biblical prophets experienced it, but he does the second best: he tries to demonstrate its existence. But for Heidegger there is no security, no happy ending, no divine shepherd; hope is replaced by thinking; the longing for eternity, belief in anything eternal is understood as stemming from "the spirit of revenge," from the desire to escape from all passing away into something that never passes away.²⁰

The controversy can easily degenerate into a race in which he wins who offers the smallest security and the greatest terror, and regarding which it would not be difficult to guess who would be the winner. But just as an assertion does not become true because it is shown to be comforting, it does not become true because it is shown to be terrifying. The serious question concerns man's certainty or knowledge of the divine promises or covenants. They are known through what God Himself says in the Scriptures. According to Buber, whose belief in revelation is admittedly "not mixed up with any 'orthodoxy'," what we read in the Bible is in all cases, even when God is said to have said something (as for example and above all in the case of the Ten Commandments), what the biblical authors say, and what the biblical authors say is never more than a human expression of God's speechless call or a human response to that call or a manmade "image," a human interpretation—an experienced human interpretation, to be sure—of what God "said." Such "images" constitute not only Judaism and Christianity but all religions. All such "images" are "distorting and yet correct, perishable like an image in a dream and yet verified in eternity."²¹ The experience of God is surely not specifically Jewish. Besides, can one say that one experiences God as the creator of heaven and earth, i.e., that one knows from the experience taken by itself of God that He is the creator of heaven and earth, or that men who are not prophets experience God as a thinking, willing, and speaking being? Is the absolute experience necessarily the experience of a Thou?²² Every assertion about the absolute experience which says more than that what is experienced is the Presence or the Call, is not the experiencer, is not flesh and blood, is the wholly other, is death or nothingness, is an "image" or interpre-

tation; that any one interpretation is the simply true interpretation is not known, but “merely believed.” One cannot establish that any particular interpretation of the absolute experience is the most adequate interpretation on the ground that it alone agrees with all other experiences, for instance, with the experienced mystery of the Jewish fate, for the Jewish fate is a mystery only on the basis of a particular interpretation of the absolute experience, or rather the Jewish fate is the outcome of one particular interpretation of the absolute experience. The very emphasis on the absolute experience as experience compels one to demand that it be made as clear as possible what the experience by itself conveys, that it not be tampered with, that it be carefully distinguished from every interpretation of the experience, for the interpretations may be suspected of being attempts to render bearable and harmless the experienced which admittedly comes from without down upon man and is undesired, or to cover over man’s radical unprotectedness, loneliness, and exposedness.²³

Yet—Buber could well have retorted—does not precisely this objection mean that the atheistic suspicion is as much a possibility, an interpretation, and hence is as much “merely believed” as the theistic one? And is not being based on belief, which is the pride of religion, a calamity for philosophy? Can the new thinking consistently reject or (what is the same thing) pass by revelation? Through judging others, Nietzsche himself had established the criterion by which his doctrine is to be judged. In attacking the “optimistic” as well as the “pessimistic” atheism of his age, he had made clear that the denial of the biblical God demands the denial of biblical morality, however secularized, which, so far from being self-evident or rational, has no other support than the biblical God; mercy, compassion, egalitarianism, brotherly love, or altruism must give way to cruelty and its kin.²⁴ But Nietzsche did not leave things at “the blond beast.” He proclaimed “the overman,” and the overman transcends man as hitherto known at his highest. What distinguishes Nietzsche in his view from all earlier philosophers is the fact that he possesses “the historical sense,”²⁵ i.e., the awareness that the human soul has no unchangeable essence or limits, but is essentially historical. The most profound change which the human soul has hitherto undergone, the most important enlargement and deepening which it has hitherto experienced, is due, according to Nietzsche, to the Bible. “These Greeks have much on their conscience—falsification was their particular craft, the whole European psychology suffers from the Greek *superficialities*; and without that little bit of Judaism, etc. etc.” Hence the overman is “the Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul.”²⁶ Not only was biblical morality as veracity or intellectual probity at work in the destruc-

tion of biblical theology and biblical morality; not only is it at work in the questioning of that very probity, of "*our* virtue, which alone has remained to us";²⁷ biblical morality will remain at work in the morality of the overman. The overman is inseparable from "the philosophy of the future." The philosophy of the future is distinguished from traditional philosophy, which pretended to be purely theoretical, by the fact that it is consciously the outcome of a will: the fundamental awareness is not purely theoretical, but theoretical and practical, inseparable from an act of the will or a decision. The fundamental awareness characteristic of the new thinking is a secularized version of the biblical faith as interpreted by Christian theology.²⁸ What is true of Nietzsche is no less true of the author of *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger wishes to expel from philosophy the last relics of Christian theology like the notions of "eternal truths" and "the idealized absolute subject." But the understanding of man which he opposes to the Greek understanding of man as the rational animal is, as he emphasizes, primarily the biblical understanding of man as created in the image of God. Accordingly, he interprets human life in the light of "being towards death," "anguish," "conscience," and "guilt"; in this most important respect he is much more Christian than Nietzsche.²⁹ The efforts of the new thinking to escape from the evidence of the biblical understanding of man, i.e., from biblical morality, have failed. And, as we have learned from Nietzsche, biblical morality demands the biblical God.

Considerations of this kind seemed to decide the issue in favor of Rosenzweig's understanding of the new thinking, or in favor of the unqualified return to biblical revelation. In fact, Rosenzweig's return was not unqualified. The Judaism to which he returned was not identical with the Judaism of the age prior to Moses Mendelssohn. The old thinking had brought about since the days of Mendelssohn, to say nothing of the Middle Ages, some more or less important modifications of native Jewish thought. While opposing the old thinking, the new thinking was nevertheless its heir. Whereas the classic work of what is called Jewish medieval philosophy, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, is primarily not a philosophic book, but a Jewish book, Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* is primarily not a Jewish book, but "a system of philosophy." The new thinking is "experiencing philosophy." As such it is passionately concerned with the difference between what is experienced, or at least capable of being experienced, by the present-day believer and what is merely known by tradition; that difference was of no concern to traditional Judaism. As experiencing philosophy it starts in each case from the experienced, and not from the nonexperienced "presuppositions" of experience. For instance, we experience things "here" or "there," in

given “places”; we do not experience the homogeneous infinite “space” which may be the condition of the possibility of “places.” I experience a tree; in doing so, I am not necessarily aware of my “Ego” which is the condition of possibility of my experiencing anything.

Accordingly, when speaking of the Jewish experience, one must start from what is primary or authoritative for the Jewish consciousness, and not from what is the primary condition of possibility of the Jewish experience: one must start from God’s Law, the Torah, and not from the Jewish nation. But in this decisive case Rosenzweig proceeds in the opposite manner; he proceeds, as he puts it, “sociologically.” He notes that the Jewish dogmatists of the Middle Ages, especially Maimonides, proceeded in the first manner: traditional Jewish dogmatics understood the Jewish nation in the light of the Torah; it was silent about the “presupposition” of the Law, viz. the Jewish nation and its chosenness. One begins to wonder whether our medieval philosophy, and the old thinking of Aristotle of which it made use, was not more “empirical,” more in harmony with the “given,” than an unqualified empiricism which came into being through opposition to modern constructionist philosophy as well as to modern scientific empiricism: if the Jewish nation did not originate the Torah, but is manifestly constituted by the Torah, it is necessarily preceded by the Torah, which was created prior to the world and for the sake of which the world was created. The dogma of Israel’s chosenness becomes for Rosenzweig “the truly central thought of Judaism” because, as he makes clear, he approaches Judaism from the point of view of Christianity, because he looks for a Jewish analogon to the Christian doctrine of the Christ.³⁰ It is not necessary to emphasize that the same change would have been effected if the starting point had been mere secularist nationalism.

Rosenzweig never believed that his return to the biblical faith could be a return to the form in which that faith had expressed or understood itself in the past. What the author of a biblical saying or a biblical story or the compilers of the canon meant is one thing; how the text affects the present-day believer, and hence what the latter truly understands, i.e., appropriates and believes, is another. The former is the concern of history as history which, if it regards itself as self-sufficient, is one of the decayed forms of the old thinking; the latter, if it is practiced with full consciousness, calls for the new thinking. Since the new thinking is the right kind of thinking, it would seem that the understanding of the Bible of which it is capable is in principle superior to all other forms. At any rate, Rosenzweig agrees with religious liberalism as to the necessity of making a selection from among the traditional beliefs and rules. Yet his principle of selection differs radically from the liberal principle.

The liberals made a distinction between the essential and the unessential, i.e., they made a distinction which claimed to be objective. Rosenzweig's principle is not a principle strictly speaking, but "a force": the whole "reality of Jewish life," even those parts of it which never acquired formal authority (like "mere" stories and "mere" customs), must be approached as the "matter" out of which only a part can be transformed into "force"; only experience can tell which part will be so transformed; the selection cannot but be "wholly individual."³¹ The sacred law, as it were the public temple, which was a reality thus becomes a potential, a quarry, or a storehouse out of which each individual takes the materials for building up his private shelter. The community of the holy people is henceforth guaranteed by the common descent of its members and the common origin of the materials which they transform by selecting them. This conscious and radical historicization of the Torah—the necessary consequence of the assumed primacy of the Jewish people under the conditions of modern "individualism"³²—is in Rosenzweig's view perfectly compatible with the fact that the Jewish people is the ahistorical people.

Rosenzweig could not believe everything which his orthodox Jewish contemporaries in Germany believed. His system of philosophy supplies the reasons why he thought that in spite of their piety they were mistaken. He has discussed by themselves two points regarding which he disagreed with them and which are of utmost importance. First, he opposed to their inclination to understand the Law in terms of prohibition, denial, refusal, and rejection, rather than in terms of command, liberation, granting, and transformation, the opposite inclination. It is not immediately clear, however, whether the orthodox austerity or sternness does not rest on a deeper understanding of the power of evil in man than Rosenzweig's at first glance more attractive view, which resembles one of "the favorite topics" of Mittler in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*.³³ Second, Rosenzweig was unable simply to believe all biblical miracles. All biblical miracles were indeed susceptible of becoming credible to him. For instance, when the story of Balaam's speaking she-ass was read from the Torah, it was not a fairy tale for him, whereas on all other occasions he might doubt this miracle.³⁴ The orthodox Jew would reproach himself for his doubts as for failings on his part, for he would not determine what he is obliged to believe by his individual and temporary capacity or incapacity to believe; he would argue, with Maimonides' *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead*, that if God has created the world out of nothing and hence is omnipotent, there is no reason whatever for denying at any time any miracle vouched for by the word of God.

Considerations like those sketched in the preceding paragraphs made one wonder whether an unqualified return to Jewish orthodoxy was not both possible and necessary—was not at the same time the solution to the problem of the Jew lost in the non-Jewish modern world and the only course compatible with sheer consistency or intellectual probity. Vague difficulties remained like small faraway clouds on a beautiful summer sky. They soon took the shape of Spinoza—the greatest man of Jewish origin who had openly denied the truth of Judaism and had ceased to belong to the Jewish people without becoming a Christian. It was not the “God-intoxicated” philosopher, but the hard-headed, not to say hardhearted, pupil of Machiavelli and philologic-historical critic of the Bible. Orthodoxy could be returned to only if Spinoza was wrong in every respect.

That Spinoza was wrong in the decisive respect had been asserted about a decade earlier by the most authoritative German Jew who symbolized more than anyone else the union of Jewish faith and German culture: Hermann Cohen, the founder of the neo-Kantian school of Marburg. Cohen was a Jew of rare dedication, the faithful guide, defender, and warner of German Jewry, and at the same time, to say the least, the one who by far surpassed in spiritual power all the other German professors of philosophy of his generation. It became necessary to examine Cohen’s attack on Spinoza. That attack had been occasioned by a particularly striking act of celebration of Spinoza on the part of German Jews.

There were two reasons why contemporary Jews were inclined to celebrate Spinoza. The first is Spinoza’s assumed merit about mankind and only secondarily about the Jews; the second is his assumed merit about the Jewish people and only secondarily about mankind. Both reasons had induced contemporary Jews, not only informally to rescind the excommunication which the Jewish community in Amsterdam had pronounced against Spinoza, but even, as Cohen put it, to canonize him.

The great revolt against traditional thought or the emergence of modern philosophy or natural science was completed prior to Spinoza. One may go further and say that, far from being a revolutionary thinker, Spinoza is only the heir of the modern revolt and the medieval tradition as well. At first glance he might well appear to be much more medieval than Descartes, to say nothing of Bacon and Hobbes. The modern project as understood by Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes demands that man should become the master and owner of nature, or that philosophy or science should cease to be essentially theoretical. Spinoza, however, attempts to restore the traditional conception of contemplation: one

cannot think of conquering nature if nature is the same as God. Yet Spinoza restored the dignity of speculation on the basis of modern philosophy or science, of a new understanding of "nature." He thus was the first great thinker who attempted a synthesis of premodern (classical-medieval) and of modern philosophy. His speculation resembles neo-Platonism; he understands all things as proceeding from, not made or created by, a single being or origin; the One is the sole ground of the Many. Yet he no longer regards this process as a descent or decay, but as an ascent or unfolding; the end is higher than the origin. According to his last word on the subject, the highest form of knowledge, which he calls intuitive knowledge, is knowledge not of the one substance or God, but of individual things or events: God is fully God, not qua substance or even in His eternal attributes, but in His noneternal modes understood *sub specie aeternitatis*. The knowledge of God as presented in the first part of the *Ethics* is only universal or abstract; only the knowledge of individual things or rather events qua caused by God is concrete.³⁵

Spinoza thus appears to originate the kind of philosophic system which views the fundamental *processus* as a progress: God in Himself is not the *ens perfectissimum*. In this most important respect he prepares German idealism. Furthermore, just as he returned to the classical conception of *theoria*, he returned in his political philosophy to classical republicanism. The title of the crowning chapter of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* is taken as literally as possible from Tacitus. But just as his theoretical philosophy is more than a restatement of classical doctrines and in fact a synthesis of classical and modern speculation, his political philosophy is more than a restatement of classical republicanism. The republic which he favors is a liberal democracy. He was the first philosopher who was both a democrat and a liberal. He was the philosopher who founded liberal democracy, a specifically modern regime. Directly and through his influence on Rousseau, who gave the decisive impulse to Kant, Spinoza became responsible for that version of modern republicanism which takes its bearings by the dignity of every man rather than by the narrowly conceived interest of every man. Spinoza's political teaching starts from a natural right of every human being as the source of all possible duties. Hence it is free from that sternness and austerity which classical political philosophy shares with ancient law—a sternness which Aristotle expressed classically by saying that what the law does not command it forbids. Hence Spinoza is free from the classical aversion to commercialism; he rejects the traditional demand for sumptuary laws. Generally speaking his polity gives the passions much greater freedom and correspondingly counts much less

on the power of reason than the polity of the classics. For whereas for the classics the life of passion is a life against nature, for Spinoza everything that is, is natural. For Spinoza there are no natural ends, and hence in particular there is no end natural to man. He is therefore compelled to give a novel account of man's end (the life devoted to contemplation): man's end is not natural, but rational, the result of man's figuring it out, of man's "forming an idea of man, as of a model of human nature." He thus decisively prepares the modern notion of the "ideal" as a work of the human mind or as a human project, as distinguished from an end imposed on man by nature.

The formal reception of Spinoza took place in 1785 when F. H. Jacobi published his book *On the Doctrine of Spinoza, in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*. Jacobi made public the fact that in Lessing's view there was no philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza. The philosophy of Kant's great successors was consciously a synthesis of Spinoza's and Kant's philosophies. Spinoza's characteristic contribution to this synthesis was a novel conception of God. He thus showed the way toward a new religion or religiousness which was to inspire a wholly new kind of society, a new kind of Church. He became the sole father of that new Church which was to be universal in fact, and not merely in claim as other churches, because its foundation was no longer any positive revelation—a Church whose rulers were not priests or pastors, but philosophers and artists and whose flock were the circles of culture and property. It was of the utmost importance to that Church that its father was not a Christian, but a Jew who had informally embraced a Christianity without dogmas and sacraments. The millennial antagonism between Judaism and Christianity was about to disappear. The new Church would transform Jews and Christians into human beings—into human beings of a certain kind: cultured human beings, human beings who, because they possessed science and art, did not need religion in addition. The new society, constituted by the aspiration common to all its members toward the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, emancipated the Jews in Germany. Spinoza became the symbol of that emancipation which was to be not only emancipation but secular redemption. In Spinoza, a thinker and a saint who was both a Jew and a Christian and hence neither, all cultured families of the earth, it was hoped, will be blessed. In a word, the non-Jewish world, having been molded to a considerable extent by Spinoza, had become receptive to Jews who were willing to assimilate themselves to it.

The celebration of Spinoza had become equally necessary on purely Jewish grounds. As we have seen, the emphasis had shifted from the Torah to the Jewish nation, and the Jewish nation could not be con-

sidered the source of the Torah if it was not understood as an organism with a soul of its own; that soul had expressed itself originally and classically in the Bible, although not in all parts of the Bible equally. From the days of the Bible, there was always the conflict between prophet and priest, between the inspired and the uninspired, between profound subterranean Judaism and official Judaism. Official Judaism was legalistic and hence rationalistic. Its rationalism had received most powerful support from the philosophic rationalism of alien origin which had found its perfect expression in the Platonic conception of God as an artificer who makes the universe by looking up to the unchangeable, lifeless ideas. In accordance with this, official Judaism asserted that God has created the world and governs it *sub ratione boni*. Precisely because he believed in the profoundly understood divinity of the Bible, Spinoza revolted against this official assertion in the name of the absolutely free or sovereign God of the Bible—of the God Who will be What He will be, Who will be gracious to whom He will be gracious and will show mercy to whom He will show mercy. Moved by the same spirit, he embraced with enthusiasm Paul's doctrine of predestination. The biblical God has created man in His image: male and female did He create them. The male and the female, form and matter, cogitation and extension, are then equally attributes of God; Spinoza rejects both Greek idealism and Christian spiritualism. The biblical God forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil; Spinoza's God is simply beyond good and evil. God's might is His right, and therefore the power of every being is as such its right; Spinoza lifts Machiavellianism to theological heights. Good and evil differ only from a merely human point of view; theologically the distinction is meaningless. The evil passions are evil only with a view to human utility; in themselves they show forth the might and the right of God no less than other things which we admire and by the contemplation of which we are delighted. In the state of nature, i.e., independently of human convention, there is nothing just and unjust, no duty and no guilt, and the state of nature does not simply vanish when civil society is established: pangs of conscience are nothing but feelings of displeasure which arise when a plan has gone wrong. Hence there are no vestiges of divine justice to be found except where just men reign. All human acts are modes of the one God Who possesses infinitely many attributes each of which is infinite and only two of which are known to us, Who is therefore a mysterious God, Whose mysterious love reveals itself in eternally and necessarily bringing forth love and hatred, nobility and baseness, saintliness and depravity, and Who is infinitely lovable not in spite of but because of His infinite power beyond good and evil.

Compared with the fantastic flights of the Spinoza enthusiasts in the two camps, of the moralists and the immoralists, Cohen's understanding of Spinoza is sobriety itself. All the more impressive is his severe indictment of Spinoza.³⁶ He shows first that in his *Theologico-Political Treatise* Spinoza speaks from a Christian point of view and accordingly accepts the entire Christian critique of Judaism, but goes much even beyond that Christian critique in his own critique. Spinoza accepts against his better knowledge the assertion of Jesus that Judaism commands the hatred of the enemy. He opposes spiritual and universalistic Christianity to carnal and particularistic Judaism: the core of Judaism is the Mosaic law as a particularistic, not to say tribal, law which serves no other end than the earthly or political felicity of the Jewish nation; the Torah does not teach morality, i.e., universal morality; the Mosaic religion is merely national; Moses' God is a tribal and in addition a corporeal God. By denying that the God of Israel is the God of all mankind Spinoza has blasphemed the God of Israel. He reduces Jewish religion to a doctrine of the Jewish state. For him, the Torah is of merely human origin.

Cohen shows next that the Christianity in the light of which Spinoza condemns Judaism is not historical or actual Christianity, but an idealized Christianity, and hence that while he idealizes Christianity, he denigrates Judaism. He shows then that Spinoza admits the universalistic character of the Old Testament prophecy, thus contradicting himself grossly. This contradiction clearly proves his lack of good faith.³⁷ Nor is this all. While taking the side of spiritual and transpolitical Christianity against carnal and political Judaism, Spinoza contradicts this whole argument by taking the side of the state not only against all churches but against all religion as well. "He put religion altogether," i.e., not merely Judaism, "outside the sphere of truth." Starting like all other sophists from the equation of right and might, he conceives of the state entirely in terms of power politics, i.e., as divorced from religion and morality, and he puts the state thus conceived above religion. This does not mean that he deifies the state. On the contrary, he is concerned above everything else with what he calls philosophy, which he assumes to be wholly inaccessible directly or indirectly to the large majority of men. He has no compunction whatever about affirming the radical and unmodifiable inequality of men without ever wondering "how can nature, how can God answer for this difference among men?" Hence his sympathy for democracy is suspect. He is compelled to erect an eternal barrier between popular education and science or philosophy, and therewith between the state and reason. There is no place in his thought for the enlightenment of the people. He has no heart for the

people, no compassion. He cannot admit a messianic future of mankind when all men will be united in genuine knowledge of God. This is the reason why he is altogether blind to biblical prophecy and hence to the core of Judaism.³⁸

On the basis of all these facts Cohen reached the conclusion that so far from deserving celebration, Spinoza fully deserved the excommunication. Far from rescinding the excommunication, Cohen confirmed it, acting as a judge in the highest court of appeal. The grounds of his verdict were not the same as the grounds of the lower court. He was not concerned with Spinoza's transgression of the ceremonial law and his denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He condemned Spinoza because of his infidelity in the simple human sense, of his complete lack of loyalty to his own people, of his acting like an enemy of the Jews and thus giving aid and comfort to the many enemies of the Jews, of his behaving like a base traitor. Spinoza remains up to the present day the accuser par excellence of Judaism before an anti-Jewish world; the disposition of his mind and heart toward Jews and Judaism was "unnatural," he committed a "humanly incomprehensible act of treason," he was possessed by "an evil demon."³⁹

Our case against Spinoza is in some respects even stronger than Cohen thought. One may doubt whether Spinoza's action is humanly incomprehensible or demoniac, but one must grant that it is amazingly unscrupulous. Cohen is justly perplexed by the fact that "the center of the whole [theologico-political] treatise" is the disparagement of Moses and the idealization of Jesus, although the purpose of the work is to secure the freedom of philosophizing. He explains this anomaly by Spinoza's belief that the suppression of philosophy goes back to the Mosaic law. Cohen does not assert that Moses championed the freedom of philosophy, but he raises the pertinent question whether Jesus championed it.⁴⁰ Why then does Spinoza treat Judaism and Christianity differently? Why does he take the side of Christianity in the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, in a conflict of no concern to him as a philosopher? Cohen believes that Spinoza had a genuine reverence for Jesus' teachings. According to Spinoza's own statements he preferred spiritual Christianity to carnal Judaism.⁴¹ But is Spinoza a spiritualist? Cohen says that spirit or mind, if applied to God, is no less a metaphor than hand, voice, or mouth. He thus merely repeats what Spinoza himself asserts; Spinoza may be said to have denied that God has a spirit or mind. The question returns: why does Spinoza treat Christianity differently from Judaism? Cohen comes closest to the truth in saying that Spinoza's motive was fear,⁴² surely a "humanly comprehensible" motive. Or, to start again from the beginning, Spinoza, attempting to

achieve the liberation of philosophy in a book addressed to Christians, cannot but appeal to the Christian prejudices which include anti-Jewish prejudices; he fights Christian prejudices by appealing to Christian prejudices; appealing to the Christian prejudice against Judaism, he exhorts the Christians to free essentially spiritual Christianity from all carnal Jewish relics (e.g., the belief in the resurrection of the body). Generally speaking, he makes the Old Testament against his better knowledge the scapegoat for everything he finds objectionable in actual Christianity. In spite of all this he asserts that the prophets were as universalistic as Jesus and the apostles or, more precisely, that both Testaments teach with equal clarity everywhere the universal divine law or the universal religion of justice and charity. Why this strange reversal, this flagrant contradiction?

At this point Cohen fails to follow Spinoza's thought. The purpose of the *Treatise* is to show the way toward a liberal society which is based on the recognition of the authority of the Bible, i.e., of the Old Testament taken by itself and of the two Testaments taken together. The argument culminates in the fourteenth chapter in which he enumerates seven dogmas which are the indispensable fundamentals of faith, of biblical faith—the seven “roots,” as the Jewish medieval thinkers would say. They are essential to “the catholic or universal faith,” to the religion which will be the established religion in the well-ordered republic; belief in these seven dogmas is the only belief necessary and sufficient for salvation. They derive equally from the Old Testament taken by itself and from the New Testament taken by itself.⁴³ They do not contain anything specifically Christian nor anything specifically Jewish. They are equally acceptable to Jews and to Christians. The liberal society with a view to which Spinoza has composed the *Treatise* is then a society of which Jews and Christians can be equally members, of which Jews and Christians can be equal members. For such a society he wished to provide. The establishment of such a society required in his opinion the abrogation of the Mosaic law insofar as it is a particularistic and political law, and especially of the ceremonial laws: since Moses' religion is a political law, to adhere to his religion as he proclaimed it is incompatible with being the citizen of any other state, whereas Jesus was not a legislator, but only a teacher.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that Spinoza is so anxious to prove that Moses' law lost its obligatory power, and that the Jews ceased to be the chosen people, with the loss of the Jewish state: the Jews cannot be at the same time the members of two nations and subject to two comprehensive legal codes. Spinoza stresses the abrogation of the ceremonial law, however, not only because that abrogation is in his opinion a necessary condition of civic equality of the Jews but also as

desirable for its own sake: the ceremonial law is infinitely burdensome, nay, a curse.⁴⁵

In providing for the liberal state, Spinoza provides for a Judaism which is liberal in the extreme. The "assimilationist" "solution to the Jewish problem" which Spinoza may be said to have suggested was more important from his point of view than the "Zionist" one which he likewise suggested. The latter as he understood it could seem to require the preservation of the ceremonial law although the abandonment of the spirit which has animated it hitherto.⁴⁶ The former suggestion and the general purpose of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* are obviously connected: freedom of philosophy requires, or seems to require, a liberal state, and a liberal state is a state which is not as such either Christian or Jewish. Even Cohen sensed for a moment that Spinoza was not entirely free from sympathy with his people.⁴⁷ Spinoza may have hated Judaism; he did not hate the Jewish people. However bad a Jew he may have been in all other respects, he thought of the liberation of the Jews in the only way in which he could think of it, given his philosophy. But precisely if this is so, we must stress all the more the fact that the manner in which he sets forth his proposal—to say nothing of the proposal itself—is Machiavellian: the humanitarian end seems to justify every means; he plays a most dangerous game;⁴⁸ his procedure is as much beyond good and evil as his God.

All this does not mean, however, that Cohen's critique of Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* is altogether convincing. His political thought claims to be inspired by biblical prophecy and hence is messianic. In opposition to Spinoza, it starts from the radical difference between nature and morality, the Is and the Ought, egoism and pure will. The state is essentially moral, and morality cannot be actual except in and through the state. The difficulty presented by the fact that morality is universal and the state is always particular is overcome by the consideration that the state is part of a universal moral order, as is shown by the existence of international law and by the intrinsic possibility, which is at the same time a moral necessity, of a universal league of states. The radical difference between nature and morality does not amount to a contradiction between nature and morality: nature does not render impossible the fulfillment of the moral demands. The morally demanded infinite progress of morality, and in particular the "eternal progress" toward "eternal peace," nay, every single step of morality, requires for its "ultimate security" the infinite duration *a parte post* of the human race and hence of nature; this infinite duration or eternity is secured by the idea of God "who signifies the harmony of the knowledge of nature and of moral knowledge," who is not a person, nor

living, nor existing, nor a spirit or mind, but an idea, "our" idea, i.e., our *hypothesis* in what Cohen regards as the Platonic meaning of the term. This is the Cohenian equivalent of Creation and Providence. Without "the idea of God" as Cohen understands it morality as he understands it becomes baseless. That idea is the basis of his trust in infinite progress or of his belief in history, of his "optimism," of his certainty of the ultimate victory of the good: "there is no evil."

But eternal progress also requires eternal tension between the actual state and the state as it ought to be:⁴⁹ immorality is coeval with morality. Here Cohen seems to join Spinoza, whose political thought is based on the truth, allegedly proven by experience, that there will be vices as long as there will be human beings and who takes it therefore for granted that the state is necessarily repressive or coercive. Cohen too cannot well deny that the state must use coercion, but, opposing the Kantian distinction between morality and legality, he denies that coercion is the principle of law: coercion means nothing other than law and needs therefore not to be mentioned. He is as uneasy about coercion as he is about power: the state is law, for the state is essentially rational, and coercion begins where reason ends. All this follows from the premise that morality is self-legislation and that it can be actual only in and through the state. A further consequence is that Cohen must understand punishment, not in terms of the protection of society or other considerations which may be thought to regard the criminal not as "an end in himself" and only as a means, but in terms of the self-betterment of the criminal alone.⁵⁰ Cohen obscures the fact that while the self-betterment is necessarily a free act of the criminal, his forcible seclusion for the purpose of that self-betterment, in which he may or may not engage, is not. In other words, all men are under a moral obligation to better themselves, but the specific difference of the condemned criminal is that he is put behind bars. For it goes without saying that Cohen denies the justice of capital punishment. However justly Spinoza may deserve condemnation for his Machiavelli-inspired hardheartedness, it is to be feared that Cohen has not remained innocent of the opposite extreme. Since he attacks Spinoza in the name of Judaism, it may suffice here to quote a Jewish saying: "But for the fear of the government, men would swallow each other alive."⁵¹

One may doubt whether Cohen's political teaching is unqualifiedly superior to Spinoza's from the moral point of view. Cohen "rejects war." On the other hand he does not reject revolution, although, as he emphasizes, Kant had "coordinated wars to revolutions." Revolutions are political but not legal acts, and hence the state is not simply law; revolutions "suspend" positive law, but are justified by natural law. They

do not necessarily occur without the killing of human beings; Cohen, the sworn enemy of capital punishment, reflects only on the death of "the revolutionary martyrs" who voluntarily sacrifice their lives, but not on the death of their victims. Kant had questioned the legitimacy of revolution on the ground that its maxim does not stand the test of publicity, which in his view every honest maxim stands: the preparation of every revolution is necessarily conspiratorial or secret. To counter this argument Cohen observes that the moral basis of revolutions is the original contract which, "being only an idea, is always only an interior, hence secret presupposition." The same reasoning would lead to the further conclusion that the original contract, nay, Cohen's theology, must never be publicly mentioned, let alone be taught. It is altogether fitting that Cohen, who was no friend of the "irrational" or of "mysticism," should be driven in his defense of the revolutionary principle to become friendly to the "irrational" and to "mysticism."⁵² To say nothing of other things, he would never have been driven to this surrender of reason if he had taken seriously the law of reason or the natural law which may be said to indicate the right mean between hardheartedness and softheartedness.

While admitting "the deep injustice" of Cohen's judgment on Spinoza, Rosenzweig asserts that Cohen has honestly complied in his critique of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* with the duty of scholarly objectivity.⁵³ This assertion must be qualified. Since Cohen accuses Spinoza of having been unfair in his treatment of the universalism of the prophets, one must consider in fairness to Spinoza whether the Jewish tradition with which Spinoza was directly confronted had preserved intact that universalism. Cohen failed to make this investigation. Once one makes it, one observes that Spinoza recognized the universalism of the prophets in some respects more clearly than some of the greatest traditional Jewish authorities. In his critique of Spinoza, Cohen is silent about the fact, which he mentions elsewhere, that prophetic universalism had become obscured in later times for easily understandable reasons.⁵⁴ Cohen is particularly indignant about Spinoza's using a remark of Maimonides in order to prove that according to Judaism non-Jews cannot be saved unless they believe in the Mosaic revelation,⁵⁵ i.e., unless, as one is tempted to say, they are Christians or Muslims. More precisely, Spinoza quotes a passage from Maimonides' *Code* in which it is said that a Gentile is pious and has a share in the world to come if he performs the seven commandments given to Noah qua commanded by God in the Torah, but that if he performs them because of a decision of reason, he does not belong to the pious Gentiles nor to the wise ones. Cohen accuses Spinoza of having used a false reading of a single pas-

sage of the *Code*—of a passage which expresses only Maimonides' private opinion and which in addition is contradicted by two other passages of the *Code*—in order to deny the universalism of postbiblical Judaism. He (or the authority to which he defers) notes that according to the most authoritative commentator on the *Code*, Joseph Caro, the qualification stated by Maimonides (viz. that piety requires recognition of the Mosaic revelation) is his private opinion, but Cohen fails to add that Caro adds that the opinion is correct. Caro would not have said this if Maimonides' opinion contradicted the consensus of Judaism.

Cohen (or his authority) also notes that, according to the most authentic text of the *Code*, the Gentile who performs the seven Noahidic commandments because of a decision of reason does not indeed belong to the pious Gentiles, but to the wise ones.⁵⁶ But Cohen does not show that Spinoza knew that reading to be the most authentic reading. The reading used by Spinoza is still the common reading, which it would not be if it were in shocking contrast to the consensus of Judaism as Cohen asserts and hence would have shocked every Jewish reader.⁵⁷ In addition, the allegedly best reading does not necessarily improve the fate of the wise Gentiles unless one proves first that the fate of the wise Gentiles is as good as that of the pious Gentiles. Cohen finally asserts that the passage in question contradicts two other passages of the *Code* which in his opinion do not demand that the pious Gentile believe in the revealed character of the Torah. It suffices to say that the two passages are silent on what precisely constitutes the piety of the Gentiles and are therefore irrelevant to the issue.⁵⁸ Cohen also refers to a different treatment of the subject in Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishna*; but this merely leads to the further question whether that commentary, composed much earlier than the *Code*, is equal in authority to it.

But, to return to the main issue, i.e., to the question whether the ordinary reading, used by Spinoza, of the passage under consideration makes sense as a Maimonidean utterance: can Maimonides have taught, as Spinoza asserts he did, that Gentiles who perform the seven Noahidic commandments because reason decides so are not wise men? The answer is simple: Maimonides must have taught it because he denied that there are any rational commandments. Cohen might have objected to this argument on the ground that if Maimonides' denial of the rationality of any commandments or laws were his last word, he could not well have attempted to show that all or almost all commandments of the Torah have "reasons."⁵⁹ The reply is obvious: according to Maimonides all or almost all commandments of the Torah serve the purpose of eradicating idolatry, an irrational practice, and are in this sense "rational"; they are rational in the sense in which, not a healthy

body, but a medicine, is "healthy."⁶⁰ One could say that Maimonides' denial of the rationality of any law is implied in the incriminated passage itself regardless of which of the two readings one prefers; for the term which Cohen renders by "reason" (*da'at*) does not necessarily mean reason in particular, but may mean thought or opinion in general:⁶¹ it makes sense both to assert and to deny that opinion justifies the seven Noahidic commandments.

These and similar considerations do not affect the main issue, namely, the fact that Cohen may well be right in asserting that Spinoza acted ignobly in basing his denial of the universalism of traditional, postprophetic Judaism on a single Maimonidean utterance. In the words of Rosenzweig, beneath the deep injustice of Cohen's judgment lies its still much deeper justification. What Rosenzweig meant may be stated as follows. Cohen was a more profound thinker than Spinoza because unlike Spinoza he did not take for granted the philosophic detachment or freedom from the tradition of his own people; that detachment is "unnatural," not primary, but the outcome of a liberation from the primary attachment, of an alienation, a break, a betrayal; the primary is fidelity, and the sympathy and love which go with fidelity. Genuine fidelity to a tradition is not the same as literalist traditionalism and is in fact incompatible with it. It consists in preserving not simply the tradition but the continuity of the tradition. As fidelity to a living and hence changing tradition, it requires that one distinguish between the living and the dead, the flame and the ashes, the gold and the dross: the loveless Spinoza sees only the ashes, not the flame; only the letter, not the spirit. He is not excusable on the ground that Jewish thought may have declined in the centuries preceding him from its greatest height; for he "on whose extraction, whose gifts, whose learning the Jews had put the greatest hope" was under an obligation to understand contemporary Judaism, and still more Maimonides, to say nothing of Scripture itself, in the light of the highest or, if necessary, better than they understood themselves. Within a living tradition, the new is not the opposite of the old, but its deepening: one does not understand the old in its depth unless one understands it in the light of such deepening; the new does not emerge through the rejection or annihilation of the old, but through its metamorphosis or reshaping. "And it is a question whether such reshaping is not the best form of annihilation."⁶² This is indeed the question: whether the loyal and loving reshaping or reinterpretation of the inherited, or the pitiless burning of the hitherto worshiped, is the best form of annihilation of the antiquated, i.e., of the untrue or bad. On the answer to this question the ultimate judgment on Spinoza as well as on Cohen will depend: is the right interpretation "idealiz-

ing" interpretation—the interpretation of a teaching in the light of its highest possibility regardless of whether or not that highest possibility was known to the originator—or is it historical interpretation proper which understands a teaching as meant by its originator? Is the conservatism which is generally speaking the wise maxim of practice also the sacred law of theory?

It would not be reasonable to demand from Cohen that he should give the benefit of idealizing interpretation to Spinoza, who had become an ingredient of the modern tradition on which Cohen's philosophy as a philosophy of culture is based. For the kind of interpretation which Spinoza calls for is not idealizing since his own doctrine is not idealistic. As was shown before, Cohen's political philosophy did not pay sufficient attention to the harsh political verities which Spinoza has stated so forcefully. Accordingly, he does not pay sufficient attention to the harsh necessity to which Spinoza bowed by writing in the manner in which he wrote. He did not understand Spinoza's style, which was indeed entirely different from his own. Cohen sometimes writes like a commentator on a commentary on an already highly technical text and hence like a man whose thought is derivative and traditional in the extreme; and yet he surprises time and again with strikingly expressed original and weighty thoughts. Be this as it may, he goes so far as to deny that in Spinoza's time the freest minds were compelled to withhold and to deny the truth; "Think only of Jean Bodin who in his *Heptaplomeres* not only directed the strongest attacks against Christianity but also celebrated Judaism most highly. It must appear strange that this writing, which was known to Leibniz and Thomasius, which was at that time widely distributed, should have remained unknown to Spinoza." He forgets here to say what he says elsewhere: "Leibniz had seen the manuscript of the *Heptaplomeres* and had advised against its being printed";⁶³ it was not printed before the nineteenth century. Once one takes into consideration the consequences of persecution, Spinoza's conduct in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* ceases to be that "psychological riddle" which Cohen saw in it. He wondered whether that conduct could not be traced to the fact that the Spanish Jews' feelings of anxiety caused by the terrors of the Inquisition had eventually turned into hatred for that for the sake of which they had been so cruelly persecuted. A different explanation was suggested by Nietzsche in his verses addressed to Spinoza. After having paid homage to Spinoza's *amor dei* and to his being "blissful through intelligence," he goes on to say that beneath the love of the "One in all" there was eating a secret desire for revenge: *am Judengott frass Judenhass*. Nietzsche understood Spinoza in his own image. He traced his own revolt against the Christian God to

his Christian conscience. The premise of this explanation is Hegelian dialectics: every form of the mind perishes through its antithesis which it necessarily produces. Spinoza's break with the Torah is the consequence of the *sitrei Tora* in the double sense of the expression: the secrets of the Torah and the contradictions of the Torah. Spinoza was not swayed by Hegelian dialectics, but by the Aristotelian principle of contradiction.

Cohen read Spinoza on the one hand not literally enough and on the other hand much too literally; he understood him too literally because he did not read him literally enough. Hence he did not find his way among the contradictions in which the *Theologico-Political Treatise* abounds. As he exclaims on one occasion, "No reason of reasonable men can understand, let alone overcome, these difficulties." A single example must here suffice. He wonders whether Spinoza does not contradict himself by admitting that the Mosaic law is a divine law although he understands by a divine law a law which aims only at the highest good, viz. true knowledge of God and love of God, or intellectual love of God, and he denies that the Mosaic law aims at that highest good. The contradiction disappears once one considers the fact, which Cohen observes, that according to Spinoza a law may also be called divine with a view to its origin: the Mosaic law is human as regards its end, since it aims only at political felicity, but it is divine qua divinely revealed. Cohen quotes Spinoza's explanation: the Mosaic law "may be called the law of God or divine law since we believe that it is sanctioned by the prophetic light." He remarks: "But why do we believe this? This question is not answered by the anonymous author." But does not the community consisting of the anonymous author who speaks as a Christian and his Christian readers believe it as a matter of course, so that the question as to why "we believe it" does not have to arise? Spinoza had originally said that the divine law aims only at the highest good; immediately before saying that the Mosaic law can be called divine with a view to its origin as distinguished from its aim, he says according to Cohen that the divine law "consists chiefly in the highest good": hence, Cohen infers, Spinoza admits now a secondary content of the divine law without stating immediately what that secondary content is, namely, the sensual means which sensual men need. But Spinoza did not say that the divine law consists in the highest good; he says that it consists in the prescriptions regarding the means required for achieving the highest good: the divine law consists chiefly of the prescriptions regarding the proximate means and secondarily of the prescriptions regarding the remote means; since "sensual man" is incapable of intellectual love of God, his needs fall wholly outside of the

divine law as here considered by Spinoza. It must be added that according to Spinoza even the divine law in the strictest sense is of human origin; every law is prescribed by human beings to themselves or to other human beings. Cohen throws some light on Spinoza's teaching regarding the divine law by making this remark on Spinoza's assertion that "the highest reward of the divine law is the law itself": "here he has literally taken over a sentence of the Mishna from the well-known *Sayings of the Fathers*, only adding the word 'highest'." Cohen underestimates the importance of Spinoza's addition: Spinoza's egoistic morality demands for the fulfillment of the commandments rewards other than the commandments or perhaps additional commandments; it does not leave room for martyrdom.⁶⁴

Rosenzweig finds Cohen guilty of injustice to Spinoza, not because of defective objectivity, but rather because of defective "subjectivity," i.e., of "insufficient reflection about the conditions and foundations of his own person. He ought to have made his attack with a clearer consciousness of the fact that, not indeed he himself, but the times which had borne and raised him, Cohen himself, would not have been possible without Spinoza." The distinction between Cohen himself and his time, which is due to idealizing or apologetic interpretation, is immaterial here, for if Cohen's thought had nothing to do with the thought of his time, he would not have met Spinoza by reflecting about the presuppositions of "his own person." Cohen accuses Spinoza of blindness to biblical prophetism, but this phenomenon as Cohen understood it was brought to light by what he calls "the historical understanding of the Bible," and this understanding is not possible without higher criticism of the Bible, i.e., without a public effort which was originated with the necessary comprehensiveness by Spinoza. Cohen blames Spinoza for disregarding the difference between mythical and historical elements of the Bible, a distinction which, as Cohen states, was alien to our traditional exegesis; and as regards the doctrinal elements of the Bible, he blames him for not distinguishing between the less and the more mature biblical statements; he blames him for the immaturity or incompetence of his biblical criticism, not at all for his biblical criticism itself: for Cohen, biblical criticism is a matter of course.

Similarly, he states that Spinoza opposed rabbinical Judaism, especially its great concern with the ceremonial law, and that his sharp opposition had a certain salutary effect on the liberation of opinion; he notes without any disapproval that "modern Judaism" has freed itself from part of the ceremonial law; he fails to admit that modern Judaism is a synthesis between rabbinical Judaism and Spinoza. As for Spinoza's denial of the possibility of miracles, Cohen gives an extremely brief

summary of the chapter which Spinoza devotes to the subject of miracles without saying a word in defense of miracles.⁶⁵ In brief, Cohen does not discuss at all the issue between Spinoza and Jewish orthodoxy, i.e., the only issue with which Spinoza could have been concerned, since there was no modern or liberal Judaism in his time. One may say that in his critique of Spinoza, Cohen commits the typical mistake of the conservative, which consists in concealing the fact that the continuous and changing tradition which he cherishes so greatly would never have come into being through conservatism, or without discontinuities, revolutions, and sacrileges committed at the beginning of the cherished tradition and at least silently repeated in its course.

This much is certain: Cohen's critique of Spinoza does not come to grips with the fact that Spinoza's critique is directed against the whole body of authoritative teachings and rules known in Spinoza's time as Judaism and still maintained in Cohen's time by Jewish orthodoxy. Cohen took it for granted that Spinoza had refuted orthodoxy as such. Owing to the collapse of "the old thinking" it became then necessary to examine the *Theologico-Political Treatise* with a view to the question of whether Spinoza had in fact refuted orthodoxy. Cohen's critique remained helpful for this purpose almost only insofar as it had destroyed the prejudice in favor of Spinoza, or the canonization of Spinoza by German or Jewish romanticism, to say nothing of the canonization by liberalism. Cohen's critique had the additional merit that it was directed chiefly against the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. The seeming neglect of the *Ethics* proved to be sound, and thus to be obligatory for the reexamination of Spinoza's critique of orthodoxy, for the following reason. The *Ethics* starts from explicit premises by the granting of which one has already implicitly granted the absurdity of orthodoxy and even of Judaism as understood by Cohen or Rosenzweig; at first glance these premises seem to be arbitrary and hence to beg the whole question. They are not evident in themselves, but they are thought to become evident through their alleged result: they and only they are held to make possible the clear and distinct account of everything; in the light of the clear and distinct account, the biblical account appears to be confused. The *Ethics* thus begs the decisive question—the question as to whether the clear and distinct account is as such true and not merely a plausible hypothesis. In the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, however, Spinoza starts from the premises which are granted to him by the believers in revelation; he attempts to refute them on the bases of Scripture, of theologoumena formulated by traditional authorities, and of what one may call common sense. For in the *Treatise* Spinoza addresses men who are still believers and whom he intends to liberate from their "preju-

dices" so that they can begin to philosophize; the *Treatise* is Spinoza's introduction to philosophy.

The results of this examination of Spinoza's critique may be summarized as follows. If orthodoxy claims to know that the Bible is divinely revealed, that every word of the Bible is divinely inspired, that Moses was the writer of the Pentateuch, that the miracles recorded in the Bible have happened and similar things, Spinoza has refuted orthodoxy. But the case is entirely different if orthodoxy limits itself to asserting that it believes the aforementioned things, i.e., that they cannot claim to possess the binding power peculiar to the known. For all assertions of orthodoxy rest on the irrefutable premise that the omnipotent God, Whose will is unfathomable, Whose ways are not our ways, Who has decided to dwell in the thick darkness, may exist. Given this premise, miracles and revelations in general, and hence all biblical miracles and revelations in particular, are possible. Spinoza has not succeeded in showing that this premise is contradicted by anything we know. For what we are said to know, for example, regarding the age of the solar system, has been established on the basis of the assumption that the solar system has come into being naturally; miraculously it could have come into being in the way described by the Bible. It is only naturally or humanly impossible that the "first" Isaiah should have known the name of the founder of the Persian empire; it was not impossible for the omnipotent God to reveal to him that name. The orthodox premise cannot be refuted by experience nor by recourse to the principle of contradiction. An indirect proof of this is the fact that Spinoza and his like owed such success as they had in their fight against orthodoxy to laughter and mockery. By means of mockery they attempted to laugh orthodoxy out of its position from which it could not be dislodged by any proofs supplied by Scripture or by reason. One is tempted to say that mockery does not succeed the refutation of the orthodox tenets, but is itself the refutation. The genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God; it would require at least the success of the philosophic system: man has to show himself theoretically and practically as the master of the world and the master of his life; the merely given world must be replaced by the world created by man theoretically and practically. Spinoza's *Ethics* attempts to be the system, but it does not succeed; the clear and distinct account of everything which it presents remains fundamentally hypothetical. As a consequence, its cognitive status is not different from that of the orthodox account. Certain it is that Spinoza cannot legitimately deny the possibility of revelation. But to grant that revelation is possible means to

grant that the philosophic account and the philosophic way of life are not necessarily, not evidently, the true account and the right way of life: philosophy, the quest for evident and necessary knowledge, rests itself on an unevident decision, on an act of the will, just as faith. Hence the antagonism between Spinoza and Judaism, between unbelief and belief, is ultimately not theoretical, but moral.

For the understanding of that moral antagonism the Jewish designation of the unbeliever as Epicurean seemed to be helpful, especially since from every point of view Epicureanism may be said to be the classic form of the critique of religion and the basic stratum of the tradition of the critique of religion. Epicureanism is hedonism, and traditional Judaism always suspects that all theoretical and practical revolts against the Torah are inspired by the desire to throw off the yoke of the stern and exacting duties so that one can indulge in a life of pleasure. Epicureanism can lead only to a mercenary morality, whereas traditional Jewish morality is not mercenary: "the reward for [the fulfillment of] the commandment is the commandment." Epicureanism is so radically mercenary that it conceives of its theoretical doctrines as the means for liberating the mind from the terrors of religious fear, of the fear of death, and of natural necessity. Characteristically modern unbelief is indeed no longer Epicurean. It is no longer cautious or retiring, not to say cowardly, but bold and active. Whereas Epicureanism fights the religious "delusion" because of its terrible character, modern unbelief fights it because it is a delusion: regardless of whether religion is terrible or comforting, qua delusion it makes men oblivious of the real goods, of the enjoyment of the real goods, and thus seduces them into being cheated of the real, "this-worldly" goods by their spiritual or temporal rulers who "live" from that delusion. Liberated from the religious delusion, awakened to sober awareness of his real situation, taught by bad experiences that he is threatened by a stingy, hostile nature, man recognizes as his sole salvation and duty not so much "to cultivate his garden" as in the first place to plant a garden by making himself the master and owner of nature. But this whole enterprise requires, above all, political action, revolution, a life and death struggle: the Epicurean who wishes to live securely and retiredly must transform himself into an "idealist" who has learned to fight and to die for honor and truth. But in proportion as the systematic effort to liberate man completely from all nonhuman bonds seems to succeed, the doubt increases whether the goal is not fantastic—whether man has not become smaller and more miserable in proportion as the systematic civilization progresses.

Eventually the belief that by pushing ever farther back the "natural limits" man will advance to ever greater freedom, that he can sub-

jugate nature and prescribe to it his laws, begins to wither away. In this stage the religious "delusion" is rejected, not because it is terrible, but because it is comforting: religion is not a tool which man has forged for dark reasons in order to torment himself, to make life unnecessarily difficult, but a way out chosen for obvious reasons in order to escape from the terror, the exposedness, and the hopelessness of life which cannot be eradicated by any progress of civilization. A new kind of fortitude which forbids itself every flight from the horror of life into comforting delusion, which accepts the eloquent descriptions of "the misery of man without God" as an additional proof of the goodness of its cause, reveals itself eventually as the ultimate and purest ground for the rebellion against revelation. This new fortitude, being the willingness to look man's forsakenness in its face, being the courage to welcome the most terrible truth, is "probity," "intellectual probity." This final atheism with a good conscience, or with a bad conscience, is distinguished from the atheism at which the past shuddered by its conscientiousness. Compared not only with Epicureanism but with the unbelief of the age of Spinoza, it reveals itself as a descendant of biblical morality. This atheism, the heir and the judge of the belief in revelation, of the secular struggle between belief and unbelief, and finally of the short-lived but by no means therefore inconsequential romantic longing for the lost belief, confronting orthodoxy in complex sophistication formed out of gratitude, rebellion, longing, and indifference, and in simple probity, is according to its claim as capable of an original understanding of the human roots of the belief in God as no earlier, no less complex-simple philosophy ever was. The last word and the ultimate justification of Spinoza's critique is the atheism from intellectual probity which overcomes orthodoxy radically by understanding it radically, i.e., without the polemical bitterness of the Enlightenment and the equivocal reverence of romanticism. Yet this claim, however eloquently raised, cannot deceive one about the fact that its basis is an act of will, of belief, and that being based on belief is fatal to any philosophy.

The victory of orthodoxy through the self-destruction of rational philosophy was not an unmitigated blessing, for it was a victory, not of Jewish orthodoxy, but of any orthodoxy, and Jewish orthodoxy based its claim to superiority to other religions from the beginning on its superior rationality (Deut. 4:6). Apart from this, the hierarchy of moralities and wills to which the final atheism referred could not but be claimed to be intrinsically true, theoretically true: "the will to power" of the strong or of the weak may be the ground of every other doctrine; it is not the ground of the doctrine of the will to power: the will to power was said to be a fact. Other observations and experiences confirmed the suspicion

that it would be unwise to say farewell to reason. I began therefore to wonder whether the self-destruction of reason was not the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism as distinguished from premodern rationalism, especially Jewish-medieval rationalism and its classical (Aristotelian and Platonic) foundation. The present study was based on the premise, sanctioned by powerful prejudice, that a return to premodern philosophy is impossible. The change of orientation which found its first expression, not entirely by accident, in the article published at the end of this volume⁶ compelled me to engage in a number of studies in the course of which I became ever more attentive to the manner in which heterodox thinkers of earlier ages wrote their books. As a consequence of this, I now read the *Theologico-Political Treatise* differently than I read it when I was young. I understood Spinoza too literally because I did not read him literally enough.

Notes

[The "Preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*" first appeared in print in 1965, along with the English translation of Strauss's original book of 1930. A subsequent version of the "Preface" was published in 1968 in Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, with some slight editorial changes made by Strauss. This present edition is based essentially on the earlier 1965 version, but incorporates almost all of the slight editorial changes made by Strauss in the later 1968 version, on the assumption that the 1968 version is Strauss's final statement. —Ed.]

1. Consider Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, translated by Max Eastman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), I, 329–31 and III, 154–55. ◀

2. Heinrich Heine, "Die romantische Schule," in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Elster, V, 217. See the discussion of romanticism in Hegel's *Aesthetik*. ◀

3. Consider *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, chap. 8. ◀

4. *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, bk. 3, ch. 11. ◀

5. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, no. 251; see *Morgenröte*, no. 205. ◀

6. *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953), 152. This book consists of a course of lectures given in 1935, but as stated in the Preface: "Errors have been removed." See also the allusion on p. 36 to a recent "cleansing" of the German universities. ◀

7. See Gerhard Scholem, "Politik der Mystik. Zu Isaac Breuer's 'Neuem Kusari'," *Jüdische Rundschau* 39, no. 57 (1934). ◀

8. See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2, 233–34. ◀
9. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuva* 6.3. ◀
10. Aḥad Ha'am in his essay "External Freedom and Internal Servitude." ◀
11. See Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, praef. (sect. 7 Bruder). ◀
12. *Théodicée*, Discours de la Conformité de la foi avec la raison, sect. 3, and Vergil, *Georgica* IV, 86–87. The poet speaks of the battle between two rival queens for the rule of a single beehive. The philosopher seems to think of the question whether philosophy or revelation ought to be the queen. ◀
13. See Franz Rosenzweig, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin: Schocken, 1937), 354–98. ◀
14. On the relation between Rosenzweig's and Heidegger's thought, see Karl Löwith, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960), 68–92. ◀
15. Rosenzweig, *Kleinere Schriften*, 380, 387. ◀
16. *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper, 1952), 97; see the German original, *Gottesfinsternis* (Zürich: Manesse, 1953), 87–88. I have not attempted to bring the translation somewhat closer to Heidegger's German statement which, incidentally, is not quite literally quoted by Buber. See Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, II, 320. ◀
17. Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 4th ed., 422: "Der Prophet hat gut reden: Himmel und Erde mögen vergehen; er denkt sie in seinem Felsen, den ihm Gott bildet, wohlgegründet." ◀
18. *Eclipse of God*, 81; *Gottesfinsternis*, 71. I believe that the translator made a mistake in rendering "Führung einer Welt" by "conduct of the world," and I changed his translation accordingly, but I do not know whether I am right; it does not appear from the Preface that Buber has approved the translation. ◀
19. See the reasoning with which Wellhausen justifies his athetesis of Amos 9:13–15: "Roses and lavender instead of blood and iron." *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* (Berlin: Reimer, 1893), V, 94. ◀
20. *Der Satz vom Grund*, 142; *Was heisst Denken?*, 32ff. ◀
21. *Gottesfinsternis*, 143, 159–61; *Eclipse of God*, 154, 173–75. See Rosenzweig, 192, 530. See above all the thorough discussion of this theme by Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbala and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), chapters 1 and 2. ◀
22. Compare *Gottesfinsternis*, 34 with 96–97 and 117, or *Eclipse of God*, 39–40 with 106, 127. ◀
23. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, sect. 57. See C. F. Meyer's *Die Versuchung des Pescara*. ◀

24. See *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, no. 343. ◀
25. *Jenseits*, nos. 45, 224; *Götzen-Dämmerung*, "Die 'Vernunft' in der Philosophie," nos. 1–2. ◀
26. Letter to Overbeck of 23 February 1887. See *Jenseits*, no. 60; *Genealogie der Moral*, I, no. 7, III, nos. 23, 28 beginning; Nietzsche, *Werke*, ed. Schlechta, III, 422. ◀
27. *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, no. 344; *Jenseits*, no. 227; *Genealogie der Moral*, III, no. 27. ◀
28. *Jenseits*, I; *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, nos. 347, 377. Thomas Aquinas, *S. th.* 1 qu. 1. a. 4. and 2-2 qu. 1. a. 1. ◀
29. *Sein und Zeit*, 48–49, 190 n. 1, 229–30, 249 n. 1. ◀
30. *Kleinere Schriften*, 31–32, 111, 281–82, 374, 379, 382, 391, 392. ◀
31. *Ibid.*, 108–9, 114, 116–17, 119, 155–56. ◀
32. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, "Of Thousand Goals and One." ◀
33. See also Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, ed. Kehrbach, 43. ◀
34. *Kleinere Schriften*, 154; *Briefe* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 520. ◀
35. *Ethics* V, prop. 25 and prop. 36 schol.; see *Tr. theol.-pol.* VI, sect. 23. See Goethe's letter to F. H. Jacobi of 5 May 1786. ◀
36. "Spinoza über Staat und Religion, Judentum und Christentum," *Hermann Cohens Jüdische Schriften*, ed. Bruno Strauss (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1924), III, 290–372; "Ein ungedruckter Vortrag Hermann Cohens über Spinozas Verhältnis zum Judentum," eingeleitet von Franz Rosenzweig, *Festgabe zum zehnjährigen Bestehen der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1919–1929*, 42–68. See Ernst Simon, "Zu Hermann Cohens Spinoza-Auffassung," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 79 (1935): 181–94. ◀
37. *Jüdische Schriften*, 293, 320, 325–26, 329–31, 343, 358, 360; *Festgabe*, 47–50, 57, 61–64. ◀
38. *Jüdische Schriften*, 299, 306–9, 329, 360–62. ◀
39. *Jüdische Schriften*, 333, 361, 363–64, 368, 371; *Festgabe*, 59. ◀
40. *Festgabe*, 46, 47, 49–50; *Jüdische Schriften*, 344. ◀
41. *Jüdische Schriften*, 317–21, 323, 337–38. ◀
42. *Jüdische Schriften*, 367; *Festgabe*, 56. Compare *Tr. theol.-pol.* I, sects. 35 and 37 with the titles of *Ethics* I and II (see *Cogitata Metaphysica* II, 12) and V, 36 cor. ◀

43. *Tr.* XII, 19, 24, 37; XIII, 23; XIV, 6, 22–29, 34–36; XX, 22, 40; *Tr. pol.* VIII, 46. See especially *Tr.* XII, 3, where Spinoza takes the side of the Pharisees against the Sadducees. The contrast of *Tr.* XIV with Hobbes' *Leviathan*, ch. 43, is most revealing. ◀

44. *Tr.* V, 7–9. ◀

45. *Ibid.*, V, 13, 15, 30–31; XVII, 95–102; XIX, 13–17. ◀

46. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften* III, 333. ◀

47. *Ibid.* ◀

48. Cohen, *Kants Begründung der Ethik*, 2nd ed., 490, speaks of the "gewagte Spiel" of Kant in his *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, a work according to Cohen rich in "ambiguities and inner contradictions." ◀

49. *Ethik*, 61, 64, 94, 439–58, 468–70, 606. See *Kants Begründung der Ethik*, 2nd ed., 356–57. ◀

50. Spinoza, *Tr. pol.* I, 2. Cohen, *Ethik*, 64, 269, 272, 285–86, 378, 384–86; *Kants Begründung der Ethik*, 394–406, 454. See, however, Hegel, *Rechtsphilosophie*, sect. 94ff. ◀

51. *Pirkei Avot* 3:2. ◀

52. *Kants Begründung der Ethik*, 309, 430, 431, 439, 446, 452, 511, 544–45, 554. ◀

53. *Festgabe*, 44 (*Kleinere Schriften*, 355). ◀

54. *Jüdische Schriften* II, 265–67. Cf. *Tr.* III, 25, 33, 34, e.g., with Rashi on Isaiah 19:25, Jeremiah 1:5, and Malachi 1:10–11, and Kimchi on Isaiah 48:17. ◀

55. *Festgabe*, 64–67; *Jüdische Schriften* III, 345–51. See *Tr.* V, 47–48. ◀

56. Misreading his authority or Caro, Cohen erroneously asserts that Caro declares the reading "but to the wise ones" to be the correct reading. ◀

57. See also Manasse ben Israel, *Conciliator* (Frankfurt: 1633), Deut. q. 2. (p. 221). ◀

58. In one of the passages (*Edut* 11.10) Maimonides says that the pious idolators have a share in the world to come; but how do we know that he does not mean by a pious idolator an idolator who has forsworn idolatry (see *Issurei Bia* 14.7) on the ground that idolatry is forbidden to all men by divine revelation? In the other passage (*Teshuva* 3.5) he merely says that the pious Gentiles have a share in the world to come; the sequel (3.6ff., see esp. 14) could seem to show that the pious Gentile is supposed to believe in the revealed character of the Torah. ◀

59. *Jüdische Schriften* III, 240. ◀
60. *Guide* 3.29 at the end; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003a33ff. ◀
61. See M.T., *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1.1. ◀
62. Cohen, *Die Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1929), 205. ◀
63. *Festgabe*, 53; *Jüdische Schriften* III, 365; see also II, 257. ◀
64. *Jüdische Schriften*, 335–36; *Tr.* IV, 17 (see 9–16), 21. ◀
65. *Jüdische Schriften* III, 351; *Festgabe*, 50–54. ◀
66. “Comments on *Der Begriff des Politischen* by Carl Schmitt” (1932). See *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 331–51. ◀